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# SCI SPY

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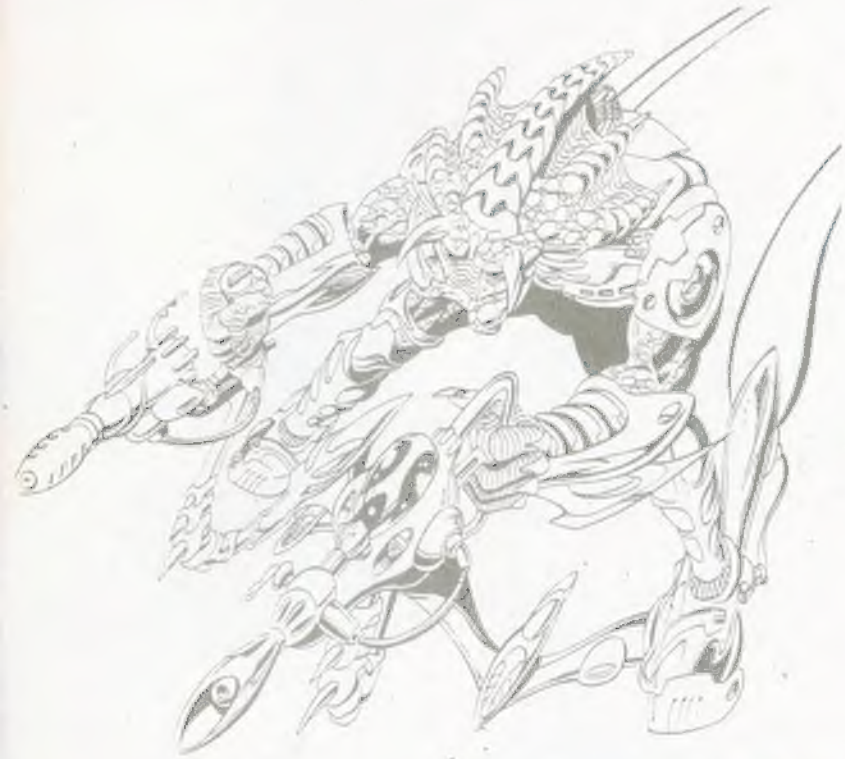

Story by
DOUG MOENCH &
PAUL GULACY

Pencilled by
PAUL GULACY

Inked by
JIMMY PALMIOTTI

Colored by
PAUL MOUNTS

Lettered by
CLEM ROBINS

Cover by
PAUL GULACY

Asst. Editor
ZACHARY RAU

Editor
WILL DENNIS

From the Mother Bank Auxiliary File:
EarthArcturus.2038

<The situation is becoming increasingly dire. The more Starchild and Nile discover about the true origins of the Arcturus System (see supplementary file: Arcturus System: rlyf-mothbank.arcturus-xb04.mx[172.20.105.105]), the more desperate and dangerous the situation becomes. Starchild and Nile's curiosity can only lead to one thing: a confrontation that may put an end to the Arcturus System as we know it. We must proceed with the utmost caution. Configure all possible outcomes and results for current scenario and update current mission status...>

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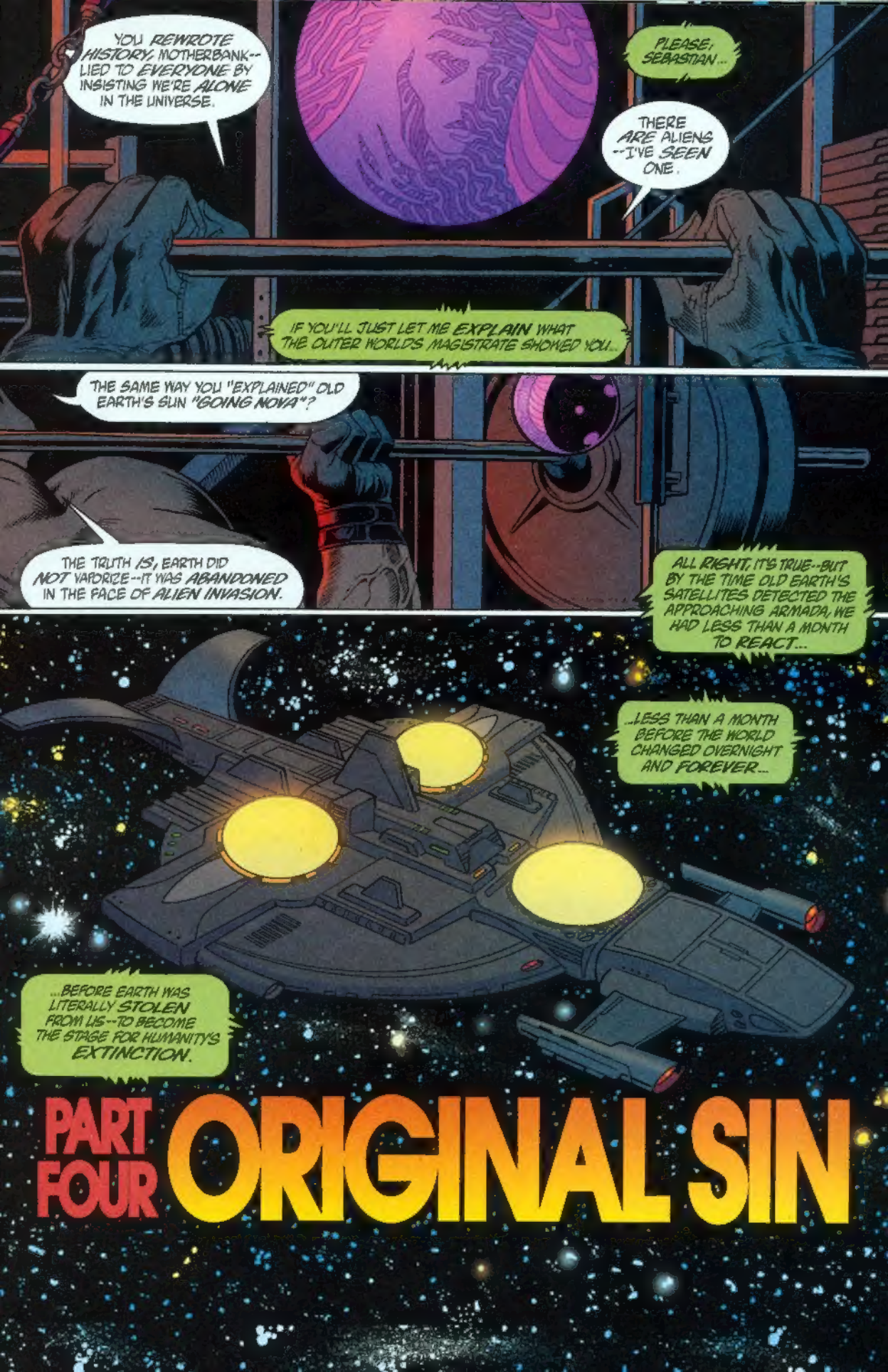
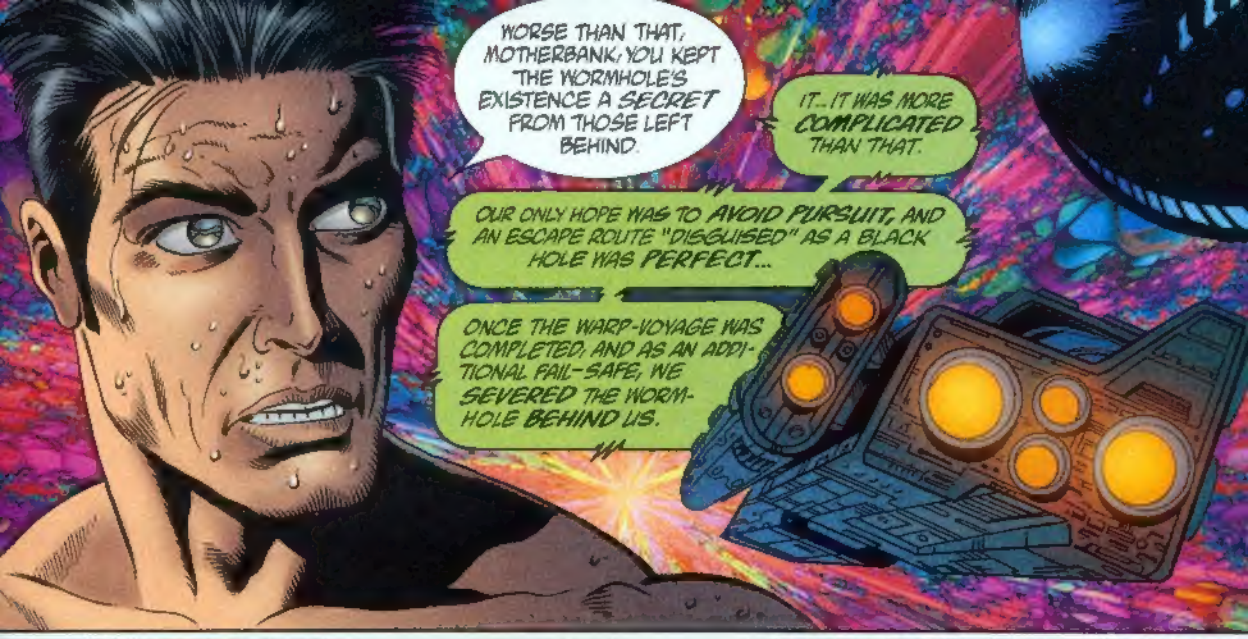

YOU REWROTE HISTORY, MOTHERBANK--LIED TO EVERYONE BY INSISTING WE'RE ALONE IN THE UNIVERSE.
PLEASE, SEBASTIAN...
THERE ARE ALIENS --I'VE SEEN ONE.
IF YOU'LL JUST LET ME EXPLAIN WHAT THE OUTER WORLDS MAGISTRATE SHOWED YOU...
THE SAME WAY YOU "EXPLAINED" OLD EARTH'S SUN "GOING NOVA"?
THE TRUTH IS, EARTH DID NOT VAPORIZE--IT WAS ABANDONED IN THE FACE OF ALIEN INVASION.
ALL RIGHT, IT'S TRUE--BUT BY THE TIME OLD EARTH'S SATELLITES DETECTED THE APPROACHING ARMADA, WE HAD LESS THAN A MONTH TO REACT...
...LESS THAN A MONTH BEFORE THE WORLD CHANGED OVERNIGHT AND FOREVER...
...BEFORE EARTH WAS LITERALLY STOLEN FROM US--TO BECOME THE STAGE FOR HUMANITY'S EXTINCTION.
PART FOUR
ORIGINAL SIN

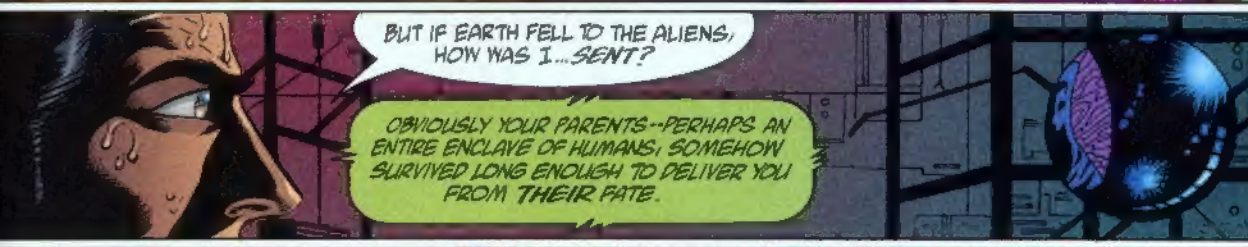
THERE WERE SO MANY SHIPS, SEBASTIAN, ALL OF THEM HUGE--A CONQUERING FORCE THE SIZE OF A WORLD POPULATION.
WITH NO WAY TO OPPOSE SUCH AN ATTACK, FLIGHT WAS THE SOLE OPTION...
AND WITH SO LITTLE TIME, WE FELT LIKE NOAH--ABLE TO PREPARE ONLY A SINGLE SHIP WITH LIMITED PASSENGERS.
BUT IF NO ONE FLED THE ONCOMING XENO INVASION--
HOW WAS IT DONE, MOTHERBANK? HOW DID YOU DEVISE YOUR SPACE-ARK'S MANIFEST?
DID EARTH'S POPULATION DRAW STRAWS? OR DID YOUR "BEST AND BRIGHTEST" KEEP THE CRISIS A SECRET FROM ALL THE REST?
DID YOU HOARD SALVATION FOR YOURSELVES?

ONLY A FEW COULD ESCAPE--TO PROPAGATE THE DISPLACED HUMAN RACE--AND YES, THEY WERE A PRIVILEGED ELITE, THE BEST INDIVIDUALS EARTH COULD OFFER.
WHO MADE THE EVALUATIONS, MOTHERBANK? WHO CHOSE THE FORTUNATE "ELITE"?
AS PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED AMERICAS, I DID... AND MY CONSCIENCE HAS BEEN RAVAGED EVER SINCE... FOR A THOUSAND IMMORTAL YEARS.
BUT YOU DID IT.
SHADOW BLACK AND THE OUTER WORLDS MAGISTRATE WERE BOTH TELLING THE TRUTH.
THEY CLEARLY HAVE NO IDEA WHO AND WHAT MOTHERBANK REALLY IS.
SHE CREATED HISTORY'S GRAND COVER STORY--A LIE MASKING EARTH'S ACTUAL FATE.
YOU PLAYED GOD, MOTHERBANK, SAVING THE FEW AND TURNING YOUR BACK ON THE MANY...
...LEADING A COWARDLY ROUT UNDER THE GUISE OF A NOBLE "EXODUS."
THAT'S ENOUGH, SEBASTIAN! I DID WHAT I HAD TO DO! THERE WAS NO TIME FOR ANY-THING ELSE--

OUR ONLY HOPE WAS ESCAPE THROUGH A WORMHOLE--A WARP-TUNNEL LINKING TWO DISTANT BLACK HOLES, ONE NEAR EARTH AND THE OTHER HERE, NEAR ARCTURUS--AND WE DIDN'T EVEN KNOW IF IT WAS SALVATION OR SUICIDE...
ONCE INSIDE THE WORMHOLES GRAVITY WELL, WE COULD HAVE BEEN CRUSHED OR STRETCHED TO SUBATOMIC--
BUT YOU WEREN'T--YOU SURVIVED THE VOYAGE...
...AND YOUR ELITE FEW HAVE BEEN FRUITFUL AND MULTIPLYING, TERRAFORMING AND POPULATING THE ARCTURAN WORLDS --EVEN AS THEY REJECTED THEIR NATIVE HUMANITY AND CHOSE TO BECOME FREAKS.
THE ELITE WEREN'T THE ONLY ONES, STARCHILD--NOT IF SHADOW BLACK AND CHAXX-PRIME HINTED AT THE TRUTH OF THEIR ORIGINS.
WHAT ABOUT IT, MOTHERBANK?
WERE THE LOWER BERTHS OF YOUR SPACE-ARK CRAMMED WITH SLAVE LABOR CULLED FROM EARTH PRISONS?
RECRUITMENT OF THE NECESSARY WORKFORCE HAD TO BE KEPT SECRET--TO PREVENT USELESS PANIC--AND THEY WEREN'T ALL CONVICTS.
THEY WERE ENGINEERS AND--
BUT THE MANUAL LABORERS WERE FREED TO BECOME SLAVES.

AND AFTER THE DIRTY WORK OF COLONIZING THE INNER WORLDS, THE CONVICT-SLAVES WERE BANISHED TO THE OUTER PLANETS.
"BANISHED" IS THEIR WORD, NOT--
CALL IT EXILE OR LIBERATION, MOTHERBANK, BUT IT CREATED THE FRICTION BETWEEN THE WORLDS--INCREASING EVER SINCE.
THE OUTERWORLDERS WERE REWARDED WITH A SECOND CHANCE ON THEIR OWN SOVEREIGN WORLDS--AND THEY HAVE NO RIGHT TO COMPLAIN.
NO--NOT COMPARED TO THOSE ABANDONED TO ALIEN INVASION.
WHETHER OUR ANCESTORS WERE PRIVILEGED ELITE OR CONVICT-SLAVES, WE'RE ALL DESCENDED FROM RATS WHO DESERTED THE SINKING SHIP OF EARTH.
NOT ALL OF US, SEBASTIAN, NOT THE ONE WHO CAME TO ARCTURUS ALONE--AND MUCH LATER.
UNLIKE THE REST OF US, YOU TRAVELED THROUGH NORMAL SPACE AND TIME, YOUR NEW LIFE SUSPENDED IN ITS CRYONIC CAPSULE FOR A THOUSAND YEARS.
BUT THAT'S--
THE SOLUTION TO THE MYSTERY OF MY ORIGINS.
I WAS BORN ON EARTH...AND I CAME TO ARCTURUS THE LONG WAY... NOT THROUGH THE SHORT-CUT WORMHOLE TAKEN BY THE SPACE-ARK.
MY VOYAGE TOOK A MILLENNIUM ...AND YOU KNEW.


WORSE THAN THAT, MOTHERBANK, YOU KEPT THE WORMHOLE'S EXISTENCE A SECRET FROM THOSE LEFT BEHIND.
IT...IT WAS MORE COMPLICATED THAN THAT.
OUR ONLY HOPE WAS TO AVOID PURSUIT, AND AN ESCAPE ROUTE "DISGUISED" AS A BLACK HOLE WAS PERFECT...
ONCE THE WARP-VOYAGE WAS COMPLETED, AND AS AN ADDITIONAL FAIL-SAFE, WE SEVERED THE WORMHOLE BEHIND US.


BUT IF EARTH FELL TO THE ALIENS, HOW WAS I...SENT?
OBVIOUSLY YOUR PARENTS--PERHAPS AN ENTIRE ENCLAVE OF HUMANS, SOMEHOW SURVIVED LONG ENOUGH TO DELIVER YOU FROM THEIR FATE.

IT MUST HAVE BEEN AN ACT OF BLIND FAITH AND HEARTBREAKING HOPE IN THE FACE OF DOOM...BUT IT SUCCEEDED, SEBASTIAN.
YOU CAME TO US--AND YOU ALONE ARE INNOCENT OF THE ARCTURUS SYSTEM'S GREAT "ORIGINAL SIN."

AS FOR ALL THE ARCTURAN GENERATIONS DOWN TO THE PRESENT--EACH LESS "EARTH-HUMAN" THAN THE LAST--WHAT ELSE COULD WE DO?
CONCEALING THE TRUTH WAS THE ONLY WAY FOR MY ORIGINAL GENERATION TO ABSOLVE OUR DESCENDANTS OF A SIN THAT WAS NOT THEIRS--BUT WHICH NEVERTHELESS ENABLED THEM TO COME INTO BEING.
HELL OF A CHOICE...
THERE WAS NO CHOICE, AGENT NILE.
HAD WE STAYED ON EARTH, WE WOULD HAVE BEEN CONQUERED WITH THE REST--ANNIHILATED BY THE APPROACHING ARMADA OF MORE THAN A MILLION XENO WARSHIPS.
HAD WE STAYED BEHIND, WE COULD HAVE DONE NOTHING BUT CAST A FEW MORE FROZEN BABIES INTO INFINITY.
AND IF NO ONE HAD BEEN ESTABLISHED HERE TO FIND THEM, WHAT GOOD WOULD THAT HAVE DONE?
WHERE WOULD YOU BE RIGHT NOW, SEBASTIAN? STILL FLOATING, STILL FROZEN IN INFANCY...PERHAPS FOREVER.

THE COURSE I CHOSE WAS HARDLY NOBLE, BUT IT WAS THE ONLY WAY TO PRESERVE OUR SPECIES AT LEAST UP UNTIL NOW.
AND WHAT ABOUT NOW, MOTHERBANK?
"NOW, SEBASTIAN, THE PAST IS FINALLY COMING BACK TO HAUNT US. THOSE MYSTERY CUBES--AND THEIR TROJAN ROBOT NANOTECH HOSTS--PROVE IT. THE XENOS HAVE REPAIRED THE SEVERED WORMHOLE, RE-LINKED THE SHORTCUT, AND THEY'RE COMING.
"WE THOUGHT WE'D CHEATED OUR HOMEWORLD'S FATE, CUTTING THE XENOS OFF...BUT WE WERE WRONG."
"IT TOOK THEM A MILLENNIUM TO FIND THE SHORTCUT, BUT IT WAS TIME PASSED ON THEIR NEW HOME--AND NOW THE DESCENDANTS OF THE ORIGINAL INVADERS STAND POISED TO COMPLETE HUMANITY'S CONQUEST
BUT WHY?
THE SAME REASON THAT PRESUMABLY BROUGHT THEM TO EARTH IN THE FIRST PLACE
WHICH WAS?
MY GUESS IS LODGING--TO REPLACE A NATIVE WORLD SPOILED OR DEPLETED
AND NOW, AFTER A THOUSAND YEARS OF OCCUPATION, YOU THINK THEY'VE USED UP EARTH AS WELL?
EITHER THAT OR THEY'RE AFRAID WE'VE SPENT THE LAST THOUSAND YEARS BUILDING A FORCE EVEN MORE ADVANCED THAN THEIRS --TO INVADE THEM AND RECLAIM OUR HOME
WHEN THE INNER AND OUTER WORLDS CAN'T COOPERATE ON ANYTHING? WHEN WE'RE ON THE VERGE OF WARRING WITH OURSELVES?
THE XENOS, AGENT NILE, DON'T KNOW THAT

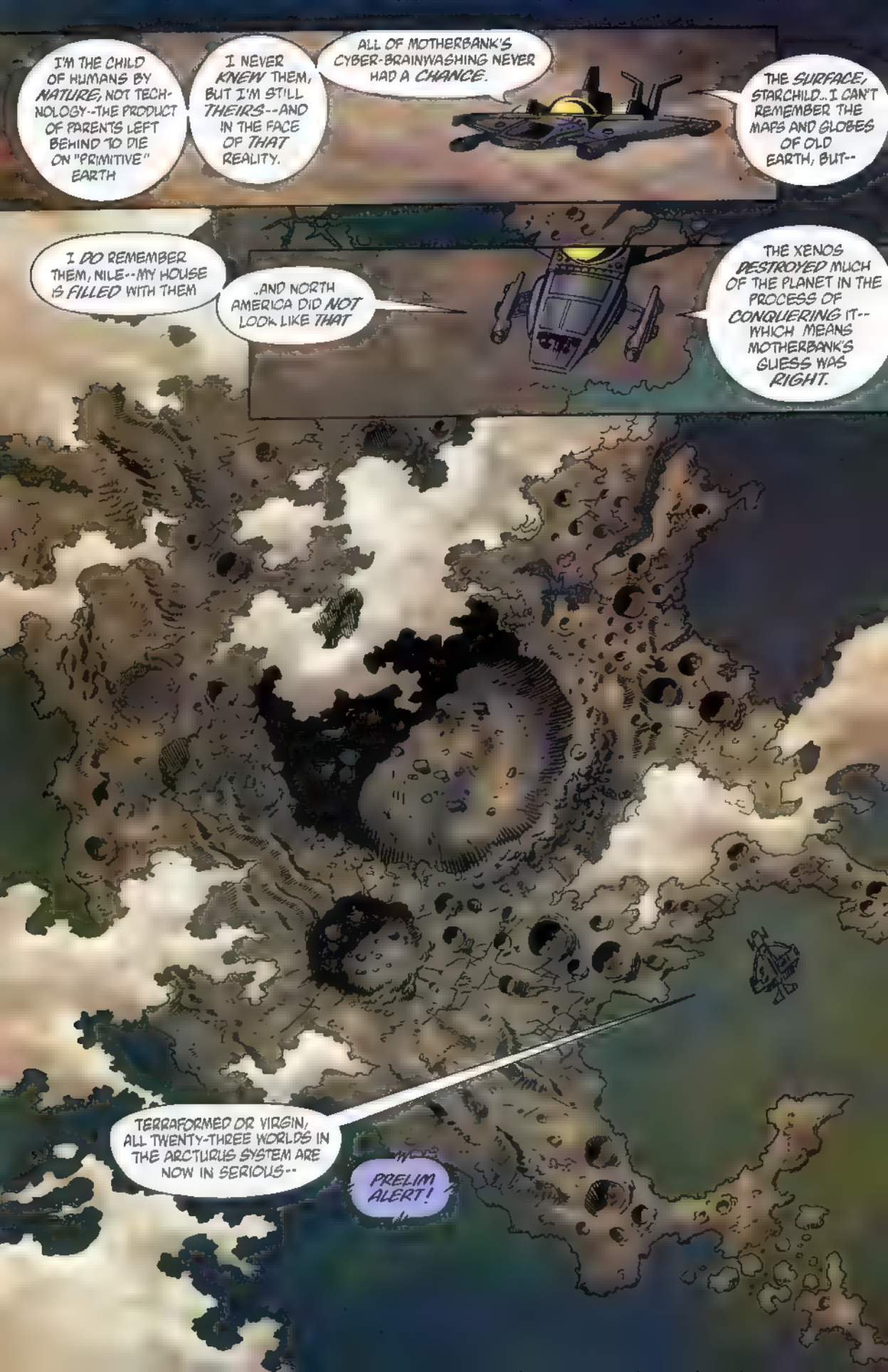
THEN YOUR CREATION OF THE ARCTURUS SYSTEM ONLY POSTPONED THE INEVITABLE --AND HUMANKIND STILL FACES EXTINCTION
UNLESS, SEBASTIAN YOU FULFILL YOUR DESTINY.
YOU CAME TO US FROM THE HEAVENS JUST IN TIME. "AND LO, A CHILD SHALL LEAD THEM"...
YOU THINK I'M--
MANKIND'S LAST BEST HOPE.
I'M NO SAVIOR, MOTHERBANK, BUT I AM WAY AHEAD OF YOU.
IN FACT, I'M ABOUT TO JACK OUR OWN "TROJAN ROBOT" THROUGH THE WORMHOLE'S OTHER END.
SEBASTIAN, WHAT ARE YOUR SHIP'S TRAJECTORY! YOU'VE ALTERED YOUR COURSE AWAY FROM PRIMUS! YOU'RE HEADING FOR --
THE BLACK HOLE, MOTHERBANK--DEAD AHEAD.
TURN BACK! IT'S THE ENTRANCE TO THE REOPENED WORMHOLE! YOU CAN'T RISK--
I'VE JUST BREACHED THE EVENT HORIZON -NO TURNING BACK NOW, NOT EVEN IF I WANTED TO
THE BLACK HOLE'S GRAVITY VORTEX WON'T LET ME
BUT YOU CAN'T UNDERTAKE A MISSION OF THIS MAGNITUDE WITHOUT PREPARATIONS AND--
I PREPPED THIS NEW SHIP AND EVERYTHING ELSE, MOTHERBANK, BEFORE ORB LINKED TO YOU
BUT THIS IS TOO BIG! YOU CAN'T ATTEMPT IT ALONE!
THANKS TO YOUR COMMAND, I'M NOT ALONE-- NOT WITH ISIS NILE GLUED TO MY ASS

AND IT'S TIME TO STICK TIGHT, NILE-- WE'RE GOING IN...
PLEASE, SEBASTIAN! DON'T DO THIS! YOU'RE MY--
:KZHZHT:
ALL SYSTEM CONTACT LOST: LINK TO MOTHER-BANK MERCIFULLY SEVERED.
YOU SAID IT, ORB.
THE LYING BITCH WAS SORELY GRATING MY NERVES.
WHICH ARE ABOUT TO BE TESTED BY SOMETHING A LOT WORSE, NILE...
THE TIME-AND-SPACE-MANGLED TRIP OF A LIFETIME.
TRY TEN LIFETIMES, STARCHILD.

AND IF I MAY BE ALLOWED ONE QUESTION, STARCHILD?
HIT ME, NILE.
HOW THE HELL DO WE SURVIVE THE TRIP?
EITHER WE PULL OFF THE SAME TRICK AS THOSE MYSTERY CUBES THAT CAME THE OTHER WAY...

. OR WE DON'T SURVIVE IT
DEET
I SEE
VERY REASSURING
SO GOOD OF YOU TO ANSWER.
SPIT IT, ORB.
WORMHOLE'S OPPOSITE TERMINUS DEAD AHEAD. WE'LL BE CRASHING IT AT MAXIMUM SURVIVABLE FORCE AND VELOCITY.
ENOUGH TO OVERCOME THE BLACK HOLE'S GRAVITY PULL?
YOU BETCHA. BREACHING EVENT HORIZON INTO NORMAL SPACE NOW; AUTO-RETROS REDUCING SPEED.
MY GOD, STARCHILD, WE WE MADE IT!

A THOUSAND LIGHT YEARS FROM ARCTURUS--IN LESS THAN AN HOUR.
BUT NO ALIEN SHIPS IN THE VICINITY
DID WE EMERGE IN THE RIGHT PLACE, ORB?
YEP--THIS IS THE SOL SYSTEM, WITH PLANET EARTH COMING INTO VIEW
..NOW.
BUT HARDLY THE EXPECTED VIEW, ORB --NOT THE "BEAUTIFUL BLUE MARBLE IN SPACE" FROM THE ANCIENT PHOTOS..
MORE LIKE A BROWN BALL OF DEATH
NOT QUITE, SPECTRUM ANALYSIS INDICATES NONLETHAL GASEOUS HAZE--NOXIOUS BUT STILL MOSTLY BREATHABLE
MY TRUE HOME, NILE.. THE PLACE WHERE I WAS BORN. RUINED BY THE XENOS WHO STOLE IT--AND WHO MURDERED MY PARENTS
NEVER THOUGHT I'D HEAR A QUAVER IN YOUR VOICE BUT THIS DOES EXPLAIN A LOT.
WHY YOU'RE SUCH A FLESH-PURE LONER. WHY YOU OBSESSIVELY COLLECT ANCIENT HOMEWORLD ARTIFACTS.
COMPARED TO THE REST OF US, YOU'RE AN ALIEN-- A NATIVE OF THIS WRETCHED PLANET
YOU SKIPPED ALL THE THOUSAND YEARS OF ARCTU-RAN ADAPTATION AND HERITAGE
MAKING YOU ACT AS IF HUMANITY'S OLD EARTH WAYS ARE EMBEDDED ON A GENETIC LEVEL
MAYBE THEY ARE, NILE.


I'M THE CHILD OF HUMANS BY NATURE, NOT TECHNOLOGY--THE PRODUCT OF PARENTS LEFT BEHIND TO DIE ON "PRIMITIVE" EARTH
I NEVER KNEW THEM, BUT I'M STILL THEIRS--AND IN THE FACE OF THAT REALITY.
ALL OF MOTHERBANK'S CYBER-BRAINWASHING NEVER HAD A CHANCE.
THE SURFACE, STARCHILD.. I CAN'T REMEMBER THE MAPS AND GLOBES OF OLD EARTH, BUT--
I DO REMEMBER THEM, NILE--MY HOUSE IS FILLED WITH THEM
..AND NORTH AMERICA DID NOT LOOK LIKE THAT
THE XENOS DESTROYED MUCH OF THE PLANET IN THE PROCESS OF CONQUERING IT--WHICH MEANS MOTHERBANK'S GUESS WAS RIGHT.
TERRAFORMED OR VIRGIN, ALL TWENTY-THREE WORLDS IN THE ARCTURUS SYSTEM ARE NOW IN SERIOUS--
PRELIM ALERT!

UNKNOWN OBJECT; RAPID APPROACH!
I SEE IT, ORB.
IT WAS LURKING IN THE MURK--NOW COMING OUT TO PLAY...
STATUS CORRECTION SEVEN UNKNOWN OBJECTS DETECTED, ALL LOCKED AND CLOSING!
IMMEDIATE UPGRADE TO DEEP SHIT ALERT!
THIS IS IT, NILE!
HAUL YOUR ASS WHILE IT'S STILL ATTACHED!
BRAM

"ABANDON SHIP! EJECT SLIVER--NOW!"

NINE MORE JOINING THE ATTACK!

MAIN SHIP TOTAL LOSS. HOSTILE CRAFT NOW LOCKING ON SLIVER!

HARD TO *MISS*, ORB--AND THE BASTARDS BUILD SHIPS AS UGLY AS *THEY* ARE

CONVERGING FAST; EVADE, EVADE, EVADE!
SCREW THAT, ORB, TIMES THREE.
PRIME THE WEAPONS, NILE--AND GET READY TO RIP WHEN I SWERVE INTO THEM.
artillery
TEK
GOTCHA.
CHAK
KLAK
VWM
NOW!!
SCHAOWW

NOT BAD, NILE, BUT NAILING THREE WON'T DO IT...
TOO MANY OF THEM--ALL FASTER THAN THEY LOOK!
KRASH
AND HERE COMES A--
WE'RE GOING DOWN!
TOLDJA TO EVADE.

LAND AHEAD--NOT FAR.
CAN YOU REACH IT?
HARD TO SAY.
WE'RE CRIPPLED BAD...
TOOSH
TOUCH AND GO ALL THE WAY...
PSHSH
...BUT IT'LL BE CLOSE.
KRUMP
MADE IT--BUT WE'RE SKIDDING OUT OF CONTROL; NO WAY TO STOP!
BRACE YOURSELF, NILE!

SHRRRLIMPH
NILE! CAN YOU MOVE?
I..Y-YES, I THINK SO..
THEN DO IT! OUT--NOW!
WE'RE A DEAD TARGET SITTING HERE!
BOTH SHIPS DESTROYED.
WE'RE STRANDED... STUCK IN THESE RUINS WITH NO WAY BACK TO THE WORMHOLE..
WHICH THE SLIVER COULDN'T WITHSTAND ANY-WAY--EVEN IF WE REPAIRED IT.
NO WAY BACK TO ARCTURUS OR--
HEADS UP AGAIN: ATTACKERS FROM ABOVE.
DAMN.
HELL OF A WAY TO SOLVE THE MYSTERY, STARCHILD...

"...BUT THERE'S OUR CONFIRMATION --JUST LIKE THE MAGISTRATE'S TROPHY."
"EXCEPT THESE XENO SPECIMENS ARE VERY MUCH ALIVE, NILE--AND HELLBENT ON BAGGING TROPHIES OF THEIR OWN."
FACE IT, KIDDIES; IT FEELS LIKE A GOOD DAY TO DIE...
NEXT: PART V - NEW EARTH